

50 PAGES

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FOR MATURE
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MS. TREE
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Ms. TREE QUARTERLY

A COMPLETE Ms. Tree Thriller
by MAX ALLAN COLLINS
and TERRY BENTLEY

PLUS:

MIDNIGHT

by Edward Gorman
and Graham Nolan

THE BUTCHER

by Mark Barron and
Shea Anton Pensa



Reynolds
Lowman
#188
X



BLESSED BE,
MY SISTERS AND
BROTHERS... JOIN
WITH ME IN DEVOTING THE
SERAPHIC RETRAIR
SCHOOL...

Ms. TREE

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WENNA LIVER NORT SU REVELLED TUB... HOSHNATPNET DOTHY TEN SLU PHEL
 SLU THAMBA SAPIENT TATH YETH... VIGLANT WEA SAGAPMENT
 RUA SLU VIGLANT



DORR ILAND IWA YEDDIN SLU
 WED NEVAN NISI ZA THREE NI...

NUB RED LNU EYD EYTH, MAIN EYTH
 ED DWONLANH...



NEVEN NITRA CHIDD...

...PENTAP RUO!





THREE
MONTHS
LATER

IT WASN'T UNUSUAL FOR A CASE
TO COME BACK TO HAUNT ME,
BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME
A CASE I HADN'T TAKEN
HAD COME BACK
TO HAUNT ME ...



MY NAME IS MICHAEL TRENT,
OF TRENT
INVESTIGATIONS, INC.

ALL, YES, I
REMEMBER



WE CAME TO YOU
TWO YEARS AGO
ABOUT KAREN ...

THAT
PHOTO WAS
OLD, EVERY-
BODY--
SHE WAS
TWELVE.



YOU'D BEEN MISSING
THREE YEARS, AND I
TESTIFIED YOU HAD
I WOULD BEING
TO DO THAT.

SINCE THEN, MY DREAM
WAS ... SLEEPING ... WAS
A DREAM. BUT I WAS
THANK GOD, ABLE TO
FIND HIM. SO YOU
WON'T SAY ... MY
PROMISE IS
CHANGING.



"YOU MEAN -- YOU'D TAKE
OUR CASE, PLEASE?"
MR. MILLER SAID.
"WOULD LOOK FOR MAREN?"

"YOU TOLD ME THE YEAR WAS TOO COLD,"
MR. MILLER SAID. "BUT YOU
KNOW BETTER. AND ASKED THE
POLICE OFFICIALS AND FAILED
TO FIND HER..."

AND THAT IT WOULD
BE A WASTE OF TIME LOOKING
FOR HER.



MR. MILLER ... I UNDERSTAND YOUR
DIFFERENCES. BUT YES, I AM
WILLING TO LOOK FOR MAREN.

OF COURSE. NOW THAT SHE'S
RECOVERED, EVEN IF I CAN
FIND HER, YOU WON'T HAVE
ANY LEGAL RECOURSE TO
MAKE HER COME HOME.



YOU ARE OVERESTIMATING
MR. MILLER. WE
KNOW ABOUT YOU.
WE KNOW EXACTLY
HOW YOU WOULD
TREAT MAREN'S
DISAPPEARANCE.



"WE KNOW YOU SCRAMBLE
THAT YOU DESERT... PROBABLY
WITH THE MAN WHO
ABDUCTED YOUR SISTER."



PERHAPS A
MORE RECENT
PICTURE OF
MAREN WOULD
HELP.



THAT PICTURE IS ABOUT
THREE MONTHS OLD.
BAGEN WAS FOUND IN
THE TRUNK ALONG A
TRAIL IN A STATE PARK
CALLED WILD CAT DEN.
BY LAMAR BEE.



THAT PICTURE BETTER
SHOWS THE AREA ON HER
STOMACH WHERE A
SYMBOL WAS SCRAWLED
IN LIPSTICK. I BELIEVE
IT'S CALLED AN INVERTED
PENTAGRAM.



MR. AND MRS. MILLER...
I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY.
I KNOW WHY YOU MUST
FEEL ABOUT ME. IF THERE'S
ANYTHING I CAN DO...
ANYTHING AT ALL...



WELL, OF COURSE THERE IS.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE. THE
STATE POLICE CAN'T SOLVE THIS
CASE...

THEY'RE NOT
EVEN ACTIVELY
PUSHING IT
ANY LONGER.



WE WANT YOU TO FIND
THE PERSON WHO DID IT.
WE WANT YOU TO FIND
HIM. AND KILL HIM. AND
WE HAVE FIFTY THOUSAND
DOLLARS CASH FROM
OUR SAVINGS FOR YOU
TO DO IT.



I'M AFRAID I CAN'T
DO THAT, MR. MILLER. I CAN'T
ACCEPT YOUR
OFFER.

BUT...

THERE
WILL BE NO
CHARGE.





"SO THE RETURNING ALIEN HAD EACH OTHER, THAT'S WEAKER THAN A CRACKHEAD'S WILL POWER."

"THE STATE POLICE COULDN'T BRING ANY OF THEIR STORIES, AND THE CLINTONS HAD SOMEONE'S LEGAL HELP..."

"WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR DROGH 9?" I ASKED. "THE CHURCH OF SATANIC ILLUMINATION," JANE SAID. "AS A PROFESSIONAL GOTTAGE MAGNET, THEY LETTER SAW WHAT WAS GOING ON. GOSH, GALLY JOOF, GERALDO, DONALD... YOU HAVE IT."



"WE HAVE SEVERAL WHO -- IF YOU'LL NOTICE THE DISCUSSION -- GABRIEL IN IT. BUT THE BEST MAN ASKED IN THAT FIELD IS WITH THE STATE POLICE ... IN FACT, HE WORKED ON THE MILLER CASE."



"RAPE, I ADMIT I'M NOT EXACTLY UP ON THE LATEST STUFF. I NEED TO GET SOME EDUCATION. GOSH, ANY DAY FOR THE THREE WORKING GUY'S DRINK CHALLENGER. THESE DAYS."



"FEARFUL? CAN YOU PUT ME IN TOUCH?"

"SURE, BUT I DON'T THINK YOUR CASE IS GOING TO HOLD LONG, AFTER YOU FIND OUT WHO IT IS ..."



I DROVE OUT TO FLAMMERS THE MORNING AFTER THE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION OF THE STATE POLICE HAD HEADQUARTERS CAPTAIN BOB MEYER. AND I HAD A HISTORY. NOT A PLEASANT ONE.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, MR. TREV. BUT NOT LONG ENOUGH...

YOU DON'T LIKE ME AND I DON'T LIKE YOU. WE HATE THAT MUCH IN COMMON... GIVES US A MUTUAL BASIS FOR A RELATIONSHIP.

I'M A BUDGY MAN. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I UNDERSTAND YOU WORKED ON THE KAREN HALLER CASE. WELL, HER PARENTS HAVE WISHED ME TO LOOK INTO IT.

REALLY? SIT DOWN. HAS TREV... SIT DOWN...



I DON'T KNOW WHY THE CHIEF PROSECUTOR HAD SOBERLY THAWED BUT I WASN'T ABOUT TO LOOK THIS GUY DOWN. ASK IN THE MOUTH SO TO SPEAK.

BOB MEYER SAYS YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON SOME CRIME CASES —

AND YOU NEED A GUY ON THE SUBJECT, HUH? WELL, I'M YOUR MAN.



THERE ARE THREE BASIC CATEGORIES FOR THESE SATANISTS. THE FIRST IS THE MILDLY SATANIST... AN OFFSHOOT OF THE YOUTH SUBCULTURE WHO ENJOY AIRGUITAR AND FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES.



"HOME ON CACTUS," I SAID. "MY STEPHEN LISTENS TO HEAVY-METAL MUSIC, BUT HE'S NO CROOKED SATANIST."



HOW DO YOU KNOW? SURE. PLENTY OF KIDS, AND ADULTS, TOO, PLAY THESE GAMES AND NEVER HARM THEMSELVES OR ANYBODY ELSE...



"... BUT IS ALL THAT DRUG-BAMMERY HEALTHY? SPEAKING AS A COP AND A CHRISTIAN, I FOR ONE AM NOT."



"YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN SOME KIDS GOING TO DO OVER THE WALL USING SOME HALF-BAKED, SELF-STYLED VERSION OF 'SARANISM' TO JUMP-START AN EXTREME RESPONSE TO TYPICAL TEEN-AGE ANXIETIES. LIKE THE BOY LAST YEAR WHO ASSUMED HIS POLICE CARDS THEY WOULDN'T LOAN HIM THE FAMILY CAR."



DO YOU CLASSIFY SERIAL KILLERS LIKE THE "MURDER STALKER" AND "SCUMPS MAN" IN THIS CATEGORY?



"YES," CAPTAIN ARMYERS SAID, "ALTHOUGH SOME EXPERTS CLASSIFY THESE INDIVIDUALS SEPARATELY, NONE OF THE ORGANIZED SATANISTS WANT TO CLAIM THEM, THOUGH THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE OCCASIONALLY LINKED TO SUCH A GROUP."



AND THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF THESE ORGANIZED SATANISTS, INCLUDING THE "OUTLAW" CULTS AND THE NEO-SATANIC ORGANIZATIONS.



"THE CULTS ARE A LEFT-OVER FROM THE 'HEPPIE' ERA -- MEMBERS IN THESE THINGS AND CULTS, INTO FREE LOVE, DRUGS, SEX, ROCK 'N' ROLL ..."



"NOT TO MENTION MARIJUANA. THEY 'MURDER' SATAN, SACRIFICE ANIMALS, DRINK BLOOD -- ALL THAT STUFF. USUALLY THERE'S A CHARMING LEADER."



WE'RE IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY AIDS.



"WELL, IT'S NOT THE 'MURDER STALKER' ARMYERS SAID."



"SO OUR 'CHURCH OF SATANIC ILLUMINATION' FALLS INTO THAT CATEGORY."

"IT SEEMS TO HAVE STARTED OUT THAT WAY," ANNEBOB SAYS. "BUT IT'S DEVELOPED INTO A FULL-SCALE AND-SATANIC CHURCH. THE BIBLES, PRAYERS, HARMONY FIFTY. THEY HAVE A WELL-DEVELOPED THEOLOGY..."



"...AND, LIKE MOST SATANIC CHURCHES, THEY PROPOSED TO NOT HARBORING ANY LAMEB THING IN THEIR RITUALS AND DON'T ADVOCATE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES."

"THESE SATANIC CHURCHES COME IN TWO MAIN CATEGORIES: ONE SPENTICE, GROWING FROM ANTON LAVERI'S CHURCH OF SATAN. 'I REMEMBER LAVERI FROM THE '60S.' I SAID, 'GOT A LOT OF PRESSURE.'"



"THESE ARE THE 'SACRIFICIAL' SATANISTS. THOUGH I FEEL THESE RITUALS AREN'T NEARLY AS VIOLENT AS YOU CAN EVEN FIND SOME OF THESE 'CHURCHES' IN THE HELLHOLE BRITAIN, LONDON 'CHURCHES'—SATANIC."



"I COULDN'T GET ANYTHING ON SATANIC OR THE 'CHURCH' — BUT I KNOW THEY KILLED KENNEDY, KILLER IN SOME DARK RITUALS."

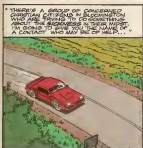




I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR YOU SAY THAT.



I GOT PULLED OFF THE CASE, ASSIGNED TO MANAGEMENT. NOW THE INVESTIGATION'S AS DEAD AS THE MILLER GIRL. YOU'RE THE ONLY HOPE, AND I HOPE THAT THAT CHILD WILL BE AVENGED. THAT BURNHAM WILL MEET HIS JUST REWARD... AND MAYBE HIS MURDER.



I'D CALLED AHEAD AND MADE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE POLICE. PLANNING TO EXPLAIN ON THE PHONE THAT I WAS WORKING FOR THE MILLER FAMILY.



TRAGIC. NOT THE FIRST TIME, THOUGH.

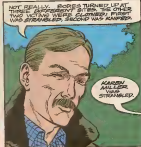
OH, REALLY?

"THIS IS THE THIRD ONE. WHO'S DIED IN THREE PLACES AND SEVERAL. " THE MANAGER SAID. "FIRST, I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL. THEN, SECOND WIFE. OF - '72. HAPPY BIRTH PLACE AND LOTS OF ADVICE. THREE. I REMIND THAT GOOD MYSELF."



NEVER FORGET IT...

WERE THERE ANY SIMILARITIES IN THE MURDERS, OTHER THAN THE VICTIMS WERE YOUNG WOMEN?



NOT REALLY. BODIES TURNED UP AT THREE DIFFERENT SITES. THE OTHER TWO VICTIMS WERE OLDER. FIRST WAS STRANGLER, SECOND WAS RANDED.

ARMED? MILLER WAS STRANGLER.

"LIKE I SAID, MR. TUCKER, THE FIRST ONE, BACK IN '68, WAS FOUND CLOTHED, AND THAT'S A LOT OF YEARS BETWEEN STRANGLER. FOR A SERIAL KILLER, OF COURSE, YOU'RE THE EXPERT."



IF YOU WANT ME TO SHOW YOU WHERE THE BODY WAS STRANGLER WOULD JUST STARTED WITH ONE SHOT. AND THAT IS NO PLACE TO BE WHEN THE SHOTS DOWN.

JUST ALSO KNEW MILLER...

THE BRICK HAS THREE HUNDRED ACRES OF WHITE PINE AND OAK. AS WE HEADED TOWARD THE HOUSES OUTSIDE TRAILER LOT IN THE HILLS AND FOREST, WE PASSED AN OLD MILL DATING TO 1888. I ASKED THE GUARDER HOW MANY MEN WERE WORKING THERE NOW.

ABOUT OTHER MEN? FOR IT IS ALL THE SUPERSTITION THERE IS IN THE AREA.

WELL, NO WONDER IT'S SUPERSTITION. HOW LONG HAS THE LOCAL BATHHOUSE BEEN COMING AROUND FOR RICHMOND?

WELL, THERE'S A LOT OF ATTENTION GOING ON LIKE STATE PARKS FOR THEIR CAMPERS. IT'S NOT ILLEGAL IF THEY DON'T DESTROY PROPERTY OR BOTHER ANYBODY ELSE. I LEAVE 'EM ALONE.

COUPLE YEARS AGO TIME I SAW THEM. I THOUGHT THEY WERE DEAD!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, WHY WOULDN'T YOU SHOOT THEM OUT? TWO YEARS YOU'VE PUT UP WITH THIS?



WHAT THEY DO IS PROTECTED BY LAW. AND THAT CHURCH OF SATANIC ILLUMINATION BLANCH HELL — THEY DON'T EVEN LITTER.



"THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE... DUCK IN A WHILE I FIND SOMETHING CREEPY. LIKE A SLURPED-UP HOT OR SOMETHING."

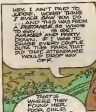


THEY MAKE THING STUNNED IN THE DEBT, OR A CHAIN ON ROCK — AND I APPRECIATE THAT. IDEAL WANDERS USE SPRAY PAINT FOR THEIR GRAPPLING AND SUCH. WHEN THEY WALK ALL AS WELL-BEHAVED AS THOSE SATANISTS.

YOU SAID
BE SERIOUS!

BONJOUR

ASS



HEY, I AMN'T TAID TO JUDGE ANYTHING I EVER SAID HER DO — AND THIS WAS FROM A DISTANCE, SO WHEN TO GET AROUND AND EVERY DEATH. IF I WANT TO CHASE EVERY COUPLE OUTA TUNE PARK THAT DID THAT ATTENDANCE WOULD DROP WAY OFF.



THAT'S WHERE THEY FOUND HER. POOR CHILD. WE'VE NOT FAR FROM THE DEVIL'S HATCHBOWL, YOU KNOW.

WHAT?

"DEVIL'S HATCHBOWL. A BIG ROCK FORMATION WHERE THOSE SATANISTS LIKE TO HAVE FUNNY TIME... BACK IN THE 1960S... EVERYTHING IN THE WOODS HAD BEEN MAILED — STRANGERS ROOMS USED TO BE CALLED DEVILS FLAT ROCK. NOT MANY GOING AND BE DEVILS IN DOOMSDAY..."



"BUT THOSE NAMES KIND OF FADED AWAY,"
SHE SAID. "EXCEPT FOR THE
FAMOUS ONE... FIRST CONFERENCE.
THEY STARTED TO COME UP AGAIN
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS."

HE SHOWED ME THE DEATH DATES
OF THOSE OTHER GIRLS, WHICH
WERE NEARBY. THEN I THOUGHT
THE NUMBER FOR HIS TIME.
I WALKED BACK TO MY CAR AND
DROVE INTO BLOOMINGTON.

EVEN THE NOTION OF EVIL BECAME
OUT OF PLACE, HERE.



THE NAME CAPTAIN MEYERD HAD GIVEN
ME WAS ONE PHILIPPO MEYERD. I
H'D BEEN TOLD JANEKEE WAS
PRESIDENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
COUNCIL, AND CHAIRMAN OF THE
"CLEANSE BLOOMINGTON COMMITTEE."



MYSELF HADN'T TOLD ME JUST BURNED
JANEKEE WAS IN. BUT THE BOY HAD
CLEANSE BLOOMINGTON ALL RIGHT —
OR ANYWAY, LETTING ANYBODY WITH
SOLID BURNERS HAVE A GRAB AT IT.



MR. JANEKEE
— THE MICHAEL TOBE.
I BELIEVE CAPTAIN
MEYERD HAD DONE
TO CALL YOU ABOUT
MY CHAIRMAN
BOY...





WE CERTAINLY
BRIEF, AND I CAN'T
TELL YOU HOW THRILLED
I AM TO HAVE A FAMOUS
PERSONALITY LIKE
YOURSELF VISITING
OUR LITTLE
HAMLET IN THE
COUNTRY.

WELL,
THANKS VERY
MUCH, MR. JAMNICK.



YOU'VE GOT QUITE A REPUTATION FOR
SHOOTING OUT STEEL ARMS, THEN... AND
YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT TOWN. I
WANT TO SAY TO FIND SOME MORE.



DON'T BELIEVE
EVERYTHING YOU
READ IN THE
NEWSPAPER...
MR. JAMNICK,
AND I DO PREFER
THE TRUTH. IF
YOU DON'T
MIND.



NOT AT ALL. AND I'D LIKE
TO TELL YOU IN OUR SITUATION,
WITH THESE DEATH INVESTIGATIONS
WE GOT BACKED UP... BUT I'M
BACKED UP... I'M THE
PRESIDENT AND
SECRETARY AND
JAMNICK AND
EVERYTHING IS
OF THE LITTLE
COUNTRY.

"COULD YOU MEET ME THIS EVENING,
AFTER THE DINNER HOUR?" HE
SUGGESTED. "I CAN BUY YOU A
DRINK, OR WHATEVER YOU'RE
DRINKING?" "I SAID THAT LONG TIME
AGO. AND HE TOLD ME TO MEET HIM
AT THE AMERICAN TAP ABOUT EIGHT."







JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU GOT THE UNDERSTANDING GO AHEAD FROM THESE GUARANTEES... PLUS TO INVITE YOU TO STOP BY THE OFFICE, WHEN YOU WANT A PEEK AT THE CASE FILE.

WELL... THANK YOU SHERIFF THOMAS.

ALL I ASK IS YOU FIND SOMETHING OUT, SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL. YOU COME TO ME... LIKE, WHEN IT WON'T EXACTLY HOLD UP IN COURT. THEN FEEL FREE TO SHOW THESE GUARANTEES WHAT THEY BEEN LOOKIN' FOR.



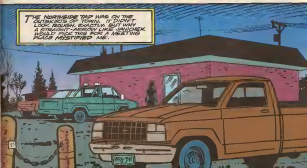
WHAT'S THAT, SHERIFF?



THE DOORWAY TO ME, WHAT ELSE? EVENIN', MA'AM.

EVENIN', SHERIFF.

THE HIDEOUTS THEY HAD ON THE OUTRIGGER, OF COURSE, IT DIDN'T LOOK BADLY. EXACTLY. BUT WHY A STRAIGHT-ARMED LINE - HANDBOOK SHOULD PICK THIS UP A NEGATIVE PLACE ASSIGNED ARE.



THE NORTHERN TAP AND REST
TIE DYE BASTARD, BUT YOU
COULD GET HURT HERE.

LAST QUARTER
ROYAL POST



THANK YOU FOR
MEETING ME LATER.
AND THERE, HOPE YOU
DON'T MIND THE
ATMOSPHERE A LITTLE
ROUGH AROUND
THE SIDES...

DOESN'T
SEEM LIKE
YOUR SORT OF
PLACE TO TELL
YOU THE TRUTH
MR. JANSSEN.



WELL, ACTUALLY,
I HAD TO STOP BY.
ANYWAY, I'M THE
LANDLORD, AND RIGHT
YOU AND I HAVE TO TALK
ABOUT MIGHT 'VE LOOSED
THE MURDER. WHAT
WOULD YOU LIKE
TO DRINK, O

IF THEY
HAVE A LIGHT
BEER, OR SCOTCH,
THAT'LL
DO.





MY DADDY WAS A BARBER,
AND A SUCCESSFUL ONE.
BUT THAT BUSINESS DIDN'T
INTEREST ME. SO I
LEFT IT AT A YOUNG AGE, SOLD
OUT, AND INVESTED IN
REAL ESTATE. AND HERE
I AM... A TINY PIECE OF
A TINY COMMUNITY.



MOST OF BLOOMINGTON
GRIEVED WITH ME... ESPECIALLY
THE CHURCHES, ESPECIALLY
THE LOCAL FUNDAMENTALIST
COMMUNION... BUT
I HAVE MY
OPPOSITION.

OH?



"YES, THERE ARE
ILLUMINARIAS IN TOWN...
IN FACT ONE OF THE LOCAL
PRESTIGIOUS... THAT HAVE
A FINANCIAL STAKE IN
THIS 'CHURCH OF SATANIC
ILLUMINATION' OUTFIT."



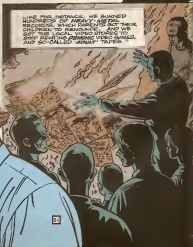
I UNDERSTAND THIS
GUY LIVING 'TOLSON'
DOES A CONSIDERABLE
AMOUNT OF WORKING
ON BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS
SO THAT STUFF IS
PRINTED HERE."



YES, BUT THE
MAJORITY OF THE
COMMUNITY ARE GOOD.
GOOD-PEOPLE PEOPLE
LIKE YOU AND ME.
WE'VE
MANAGED A LOT OF
GOOD THINGS.



LIKE FOR INSTANCE, WE BURNED
HUNDREDS OF ARABY-ARAB
RECORDS, WHICH DAMAGED THEIR
CHILDREN TO REMOVING AND WE
GAVE THE LOCAL VIDEO STORES TO
STOP IDENTIFYING VIDEO NAMES,
AND SO-CALLED 'ARABY' TAPES."



BUT IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
HARD EVIDENCE ON THOSE SATANISTS
BEING INVOLVED IN THAT BOOZIE CHILD'S
MURDER, I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY MORE HELP
THAN THE LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
FELLAS.

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE
SATANISTS HAVE EITHER KEPT THEIR
WORKS CLEAN ... OR CLEANED UP
AFTER THEMSELVES.



I DON'T ADVISE 'BOUT
THAT. IF THEY WEREN'T
OPERATING IN A
BROOKLYN-LIKE
COMMUNITY, THEY
WOULDN'T GET AWAY WITH
THEIR BLASPHEMY.

"YOU MEAN, THE LITERATURE
DEVOTED TO THE SELLING OF REAL
GODS?"
"NO. I MEAN THE
THE SELLING OF...
GODS. DISTURBED...
LITTLE NUTS LIKE THAT."



SINCE THOSE SATANISTS
WENT IN, WE'VE HAD HALF
A DOZEN COPS TUCKED UP
BECAUSE OF SOME VARIOUS
KINDS OF... DISTURBED
WITH BIOLOGICAL PRECISION
— SPECIFICALLY EYES
AND EARS OPENING.



WELL,
I THINK YOU
HAD YOUR TIME.
NO JAMMED.

WHEN I COULD BEEN OF
MORE HELP, YOU MIGHT WANT TO
COME 'ROUND AND CHAT WITH THE
FOLKS AT OUR NEXT 'CONCERNED
CITIZENS' MEETING...







I HURT...
I JUST
SHOCK.

WE'LL
GET YOU TO
A DOCTOR.
MR. JANICK.



THE BOYS
IN HOOVER
WORKED IN A
BLUE SHIRT
EVEN THOUGH
THEY WERE
IN THE BUREAU
WITH JIMMY
AND BRUCE.
GONE IN A
CLOUD OF
SMOKE AND
DUST.

CAN
YOU HEAR
IT?

YES.
... YES.



ANY
IDEE WHO
OUR BRANCH
WENTERS
WIKES
?

COULD
BEEN LOCAL
KIDNAP. AND AT
THE FOR RECORDS
THEIR RECORDS.

AND
THERE'S SOME
PRETTY BIG BOYS
IN THAT
SATELLITE
CLUB.



HEY — IS HE ALL RIGHT ?
YOU WANT ME TO CALL
911 OR SOMETHING ?



ANYWAY WE
DON'T HAVE HIM IN
BLOOMINGTON.
THE FBI OFFICE
NEAREST BLOOMINGTON
DOESN'T HAVE HIM.
BUT THE COUNTY
DOES. BUT THE COUNTY
DOES.





YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?

I'LL BE FINE.
IT'S JUST THAT I GOT AN
CALDER ... AND GETTING IT
IN THE OL' BRIDGEWORTH
WAS A REAL SHOCK
TO THE SYSTEM.



MR. LANCHEM SEEMS
TO KNOW YOU ... BUT YOU'RE
OBVIOUSLY NOT LOCAL, OR AT
LEAST YOU'RE NEW
TO TOWN.

THAT'S
RIGHT, I'M JUST LIKE
YOU AND THERE I AM
VISITING SADDON.



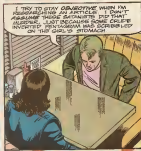
YOU
KNOW?
WHO I
AM?

I'M A REPORTING
MATTER. ANY MENTION
OF THE PRESS WHO DON'T
RECOGNIZE YOU AS NOT AN
WORKER, THE OTHER
PAGE.



I TURN
UP THREE FROM
TIME TO TIME, TOO
WHO ARE YOU
ANYWAY?

BLACK
IN DISGUISE
I'M A
PROFESSIONAL
MAYBE YOU'VE
SEEN MY
TRAIL-CRASH
ARTICLES IN
SADDON AND
SADDON
STONE'S



ACTUALLY, NO," HE SAID. "IT'S PART OF A LARGER ARTICLE, RESEARCHING THE SATANISM/HEAVY-METAL SCENE THAT'S HOT EVERYWHERE UP IN ARMED.



THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE CHILDREN OF
GARDING ILLUMINATION LOOKED ABOUT
AS BRISTOL AS A CARTON OF MILK.
OF COURSE, OUTWARD APPEARANCES
CAN BE DECEIVING, AND EVEN AS THAT
IMAGE FORGED INTO MY MIND, I
RECALLED THAT IN RECENT YEARS
MANY A MILK CARTON HAS BORNE A
PICTURE OF A SMILING CHILD...

"BLESSED
BE, BROTHER,
ELABORE!"

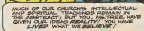
"MORNING,
SAYS, BROTHER—IT
A SHIRT ALONG.
HOPE YOU DON'T
MIND."

"AND WHO IS OUR
ATTRACTIVE CHAIRMAN
OWNED? A POTENTIAL
PATRONS IN THE
CHURCH?"

"IN
YOUR
DREAMS."

"THIS IS
MICHAEL, THOMAS—
THE FANCLUB—OR
MAYBE I SHOULD
SAY, PARANORMAL—
HE'S THERE."

"THE 'FEMALE
MINE HANDED'
—THAT'S WHAT
ED ANNOUNCED
CALLED YOU?
I SHOULD HAVE
RECOGNIZED
YOU!
YOU'RE ONE
OF MY
KIND!"



I HADN'T EXACTLY EXPECTED HIM TO HAVE HIS REVENGE ON THE HEAD... BUT IT WOULD BE A GOOD WAY TO GET HIM... NOTHING ABOUT MY BACK ABOUT THE LITTLE... THE BACK OF COLORED... WITH HIS FIRST BRIDE TO ME ON MY SIDE... AND THIS WAS A MAN MEANT TO THROW ME OFF COURSE.

YOU'RE INVESTIGATING THE MURDER OF SHELL'S DEATH? FOR HER FAVORITE?

AN --
WHAT A
TRAGEDY.

ONE WAS ONE OF
HERS. WASN'T SHE?
ONE LIVED OUT HERE
WITH YOU. WAS PART
OF YOUR "FLOCK."

"YES," MARY SAID. "BUT SHE CHOSE TO LEAVE US. WE ARE BEING FORCED TO LEAVE WILL WE, AND THEN -- NO ONE IS OBLIGED TO STAY. SHE'D MOVED OUT FROM HER ROOM ROOM. OH, I'D SAY A GOOD WEEK BEFORE HER MURDER."

"DOWN ROOM?" I ASKED. "YES," MARY SAID. "THAT ROOM OVER THERE WAS BORN COMPLETELY UNDESIGNED INTO A FORTNIGHTLY FOR THE INTERIOR, WITH THE LOWER AREA SERVING AS A GARAGE. THERE ARE 25 ROOMS IN PART OF THE HOUSE, AND THERE, LIVING IN PEACE AND HARMONY."



LET ME INTERLUDE YOU TO SOME OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS. THEY'LL BE THRILLED TO MEET YOU.

WHAT DO YOU DO HERE, EXACTLY?

WELL, ANY GOOD CHURCH DOES. WE SPREAD THE WORD...



WE PRODUCE A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER, MR. TEE — WITH A CIRCULATION OF SIX THOUSAND. HE ALSO PROTECTS OURSelves OF APPLICATIONS DAILY FOR GUYTON MEMBERSHIP —

WE ALSO HAVE A COMRADESHIP SERVICE KNOWN AS THE P.S.S. WHICH PROVIDES LOVELY MEN WITH SUBORDINATE COMRADESHIP VIA LOVE LETTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

P.S.S.? Photographs?

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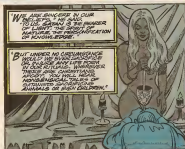
"STAYING AWAY
BLAZING IN
BURNING
SPARKS, AND
SOFT-LOVE
SOUNDS OF THE
CLOUDS. BEING
STAY AWAY
TRACING HORIZON
IN A LITTLE
STAY AWAY.
THE CLOUDS
HOLD IN THE
LITTLE
STAY AWAY.
STAY AWAY.
STAY AWAY."

100



THIS SPACES ARE AS
MORE OF A BUSINESS
THAN A CHURCH.
MR. DUNN.

"OR IT'S A CHURCH ALL
RIGHT AND THE ONLY
LEFT AND CHURCH AND
AND WE HAVE A LITURGICAL
CHURCH, A SACRAMENTAL
CHURCH, ON THIS PROPERTY
WHICH WE USE FOR OUR
CELEBRATIONS."



"WE ARE BORN IN OUR
BODIES," HE SAID.
"TO US, GOD IS THE GIVER
OF LIGHT, THE GIVER OF
NATURE, THE INCARNATION
OF KNOWLEDGE."

"BUT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES
WOULD WE EVER DISOBEY
OR DISCARD ANY LIFE FORM
IN OUR RITUALS. WHETHER
THREE ARE CHILDREN
AND/OR YOU WILL BE
HONORING THE LIFE OF
OUTLIVED CHILDREN
AND/OR OF EACH CHILD."



WHAT
ABOUT TALES
OF SPIRITUAL
RITUALS?



THE HUMAN ANIMAL,
CREATING RITUAL... DESSA,
... ASHLEY, SPIRITUAL RITUALS
FULFILL, DIVINE, INSTRUCTIVE
RITUALS FULFILL AND/OR
AND/OR SOMETHING I KNOW
YOU UNDERSTAND.

I'M NOT ONE
OF YOU. I'M NOT
LIKE YOU PEOPLE
IN THE LEAST...

BUT YOU ARE
ABOUT I INTRODUCE
YOU TO SOME OF
THE MEMBERS?

I WENT ALONG WITH HIM... ALL DURING MYSELF
TO BE THE FAVORITE GUEST OF THESE JACK
BULLY BOYS (ON THEIR NEXT COFFEE BREAK).

HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN AND EATEN
BY THEIR FAMILIES? IT HAD BEEN LURED INTO SPENDING
BY A LOW-LEVEL SCHEMING IN SCHOOL. I HAD SPENDING
HAD LED THEM TO THE DINHALL AND FINALLY INTO
HARD MANIPULATIVE BLISSFUL GUILT.



THE FIVE MAILED ON THE
SCENE — WHO DID NOT
SEEM TO DO ANY WORK.
HERE — STAYED SHUT
FROM ME. WAS THAT
BECAUSE I HAD LIVED
LAST SOME OF THEM
ANYONE? HAD ONE OF
THESE PEOPLE HAD BEEN
WITH ME IN A CAFE
THOUGH TO MY OWN
DREAM OF A BULLY-BUT?



HAIN CLAIMS THAT THE INVERTED PENTAGON WAS WRITTEN IN LIPSTICK ON THE MILLER 680-2 BELLY MUST BE BEEN THE WORK OF SOME LOCAL, TRYING TO BLAME THIS ON THE SATANISTS.

IT'S NOT THAT UNDERSTANDABLE AN ASSAULTION. THEY'RE PERFECT SCANDALIZERS. HAVE YOU RESEARCHED THE PREVIOUS MURDERS OF YOUNG WOMEN AT WILD CAT DEN?



"NO," I ADMITTED. "BUT THAT'S MY NEXT STEP." THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER WAS A WEEKLY, AND HAD NO ARCHIVAL RECORDS.

SO I DROVE TO THE NEAREST COUNTY SEAT, WHERE AT THE LIBRARY BACK ISSUES OF SEVERAL AREA PAPERS WERE AVAILABLE. TURNING TO IN THE FREELIB, TWO ARTICLES WERE EVERY EYE-OPENING.



THE "THREAT" MURDERS COULD HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF ONE PERSON, BUT ALSO MOST OF SEVERAL. POLICE SPONSORS ARE COMING OUT WITH DECLARATIONS.



KEEPING A LITTLE LATE, I HOPE SOME CHANGES WOULD BE FOR ME...



"SHERIE -- WHAT BODIES WERE AROUND?"

"ANOTHER MURDER. ONE THAT -- ANOTHER VOLUNTARY -- UH -- THE POLICE --"

"ONE OF THOSE
BASTARD GIRLS."
SUSPECT THOMAS SAID
"SARA SIMMONS..."



HIS EXPLANED THAT THE PARK WARDEN HAD STUMBLED UP
OVER THE BODY AT DASH, WHICH WAS A "LUCKY BREAK"
BECAUSE IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE SCENE FOR
DAVE. THE MEDICAL EXAMINER SAID THE GIRL HAD
BEEN KILLED WITHIN THE LAST FEW HOURS...



ON MY SIDE!!
I JUST MET HER. I WAS
SUPPOSED TO MEET HER HERE
THIS AFTERNOON - BUT
I WAS LATE...



SHE HAD SOMETHING
SHE WANTED TO TELL ME
ABOUT THE OTHER
GIRL WHO WAS
KILLED...



YOU THINK SHE
WAS GOING TO BLOW
THE WHISTLE ON
THAT BASTARD
MURDER?



AND HIS OUTSTANDING "FRIENDS"
MUST HAVE TURNED ON
HER, WHEN THEY
FOUND OUT...

WARR-
SHOULD. CAN YOU RUN
A CHECK ON SOMETHING
FOR ME, QUICKLY?



I TOLD HIM ABOUT MY RUN-IN LAST
NIGHT AT THE NIGHTHOUSE TAP WITH
THOSE TWO CLIPPING IN HEAVY-METAL
T-SHIRTS AND HOODS.



OHAY-
THANKS.
WE'LL
NO JUST
ROUTINE.

EMERGENCY ROOM OVER AT COUNTY
GENERAL DID HAVE A GUY COME IN WITH
A BASTED LEG. HE'S A MAINTENANCE
MAN OVER IN PLAINVILLE -
NAMED PEAR BROOKER.



LOCAL BOY.
UNKNOWN
SUBJECT.

"NOT NECESSARILY," SQUARED JEWELL
SAID. "SOME OF THE LOCAL KIDS
WENT INTO THAT HEAVY METAL GEAR
AND DROVE AND SO ON. THEY
MIGHT BE BEING LARGELY DEVE-
LOPPED. CANCELLING."



BUT I
WILL CHECK
HER OUT FOR
YOU...

I APPRECIATE
THAT. BY THE WAY,
WHAT IS YOUR OPINION
OF THE MEMBERSHIP --
RICH BECHER'S?

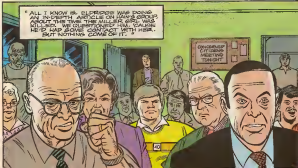


WE
ARE BACK
IN
TOWN?

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN
"BACK"?
I'M
TOWN?



"ALL I KNOW IS, SLOVICK'S WAS DOING
AN IN-DEPTH ARTICLE ON KIDS GOING
ABOUT THE TIME THE ALL-STAR GUY WAS
KILLED. WE COULDN'T FIND CALDER
HE'D HAD SOME CONTACT WITH HER.
BUT NOTHING CAME OF IT."



WE'VE BEEN COMPLACENT
TOO LONG! WE'RE GOOD
CHRISTIANS IN A
GOOD CHRISTIAN TOWN—
HOW CAN WE ALLOW
THESE PAGAN BLOOD
RITUALS TO CONTINUE?



WE'VE
GOT TO DO
SOMETHING!

ANOTHER
YOUNG GIRL
SUSPECTED!—WE
CAN'T STAND
FOR IT!

AND THE
GHOST HADN'T
DOVE A DRAINING
TO THOSE
HEATHENS!

IF THE
LAW WON'T DO
ANYTHING—
THEN WE
MUST!



MY FELLOW CITIZENS—
MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS—
LET US GO TO THE SLANDEROUS
PAGAN AND SMITE
THESE DEVILS!



"SMITE
THE DEVILS"...?
VERBOSITY...









"GOD NOT ONLY EXPOSED US TO SLIP FROM THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW, HE WANTS US TO... CRIST... HESSED AWAY... GIVE KING WITH HIS BLOOD AND IF HE FAIL TO EVEN GIVE HIS SACRIFICE WAS FOR NOTHING?"





YOU OWN A LAURENCELOT
IN PEABODIE. DON'T YOU?
H. JUST MET A FELLOW
HUNTER. COULD BORROW IS
YOUR MAINTENANCE MAN.

WHAT ARE
YOU GOING
TO DO?

EXPOSE YOU
FOR THE HYPOCRITICAL...
SEXUALLY-TYPED
ALICE - WILDERNESS
- HUNTER. YOU ARE
- NOT CONVINCE IT.
DON'T IT?

NO...
NO...





THE SURVIVOR BARRELS AWAY TOO LATE. MOST OF THE TOWNSMEN HAD DIED. A FEW SURVIVORS REMOVED AWAY TO HATCH AS THE SURVIVOR CLAIMED THEIR CHANCE.



AND BARRELS FOR ALL. OR AT LEAST A LITTLE FOR HARRY MILLER.



END

SHAKEDOWN

SOMETIMES GUNS CAN BE THE
SILENT OUTLAW OF ALL...

PLANT A GUN ON HIM,
STALLONE. AND LET'S GET
THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

YOU
SHOULDN'T
HAVE KILLED
HIM, ROONEY.

YOU ASK WHAT
I SAY, JERKOFF?
LET'S GET RELEVANT.

ED GOODMAN • GRAHAM NOLAN
writer artist

JOHN COSTANZA • SAM PARSONS
letterer colorist

KATIE MAJN • MIKE GOLD
developmental assoc. editor

IF THERE IS SUCH A MAN
AS THIS MIGHTY, BLESSED
MOTHER, PLEASE SEND
HIM TO ME...



FOR DAYS, MRS. JOHNSON USED
BURY DIFFERENT PEOPLE FOR ME.

I THOUGHT CHANNEL 3 WAS THE
FATHER OF THE PEOPLE.

THAT'S WHAT YOU
SAW ON THE
NEWS.



THESE TWO COULD MOOREY AND
STALLING, THEY HOLD THE
WHOLE BLOOD CAPTIVE.



THEY SPREAD FROM THE
INCIDENTS...



THEY BENT AMONGST THEY DON'T
LIKE.



A NIGHT, TWO MEN
JANED BY DELIGHTFUL
CONCEPT.



WHEN MY SON JERRY WENT TO
CONFRONT THEM ABOUT THIS
THEY KILLED HIM. THEY PUT A
GUN IN HIS HAND AND SAID
THAT HE HAD TRIED TO SHOOT
THEM, BUT THAT IN A CAC.





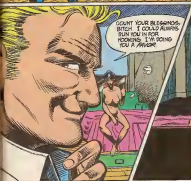
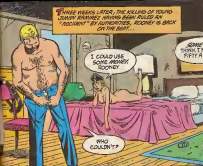
FOR THE NEXT FIFTEEN MINUTES, MRS. RAYNIEZ REPEATED THE NAME OF HER DAUGHTER AND THE MURDER OF HER SON...



IGNORANT LISTENING AND THEN...



THREE WEEKS LATER, THE KILLING OF YOUNG JOEY REYNOLDS HAVING BEEN RULED AN "ACCIDENT" BY AUTHORITIES, ROONEY IS BACK ON THE BEAT...





FOR THE NEXT THREE HOURS, THE TWO MEN DO THEIR HANDSOME DUTY. SOMETIMES EVERY ALCOHOL AND STALLING HAVE TO BE AVOIDED, COMPLETELY CLEAR...



IT HAPPENED AGAIN LAST NIGHT.

WHAT HAPPENED?



IN BED WITH MY WIFE. I COULDN'T DO IT.

THAT HAPPENS NO BIG DEAL.



PLUS I CAN'T SLEEP RIGHT OR GET RIGHT. I'M COMING AHEAD, ROONEY.



THE GUY WHO WROTE THE LETTER, ROONEY. IF WE DON'T *RAY* HIM OFF, HE'LL *TURN* HIM OFF.



I'VE GOT A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR YOU. STALLING. I THINK WE *SHOULD* PAY HIM OFF, TOO.

YOU DO?

WENT RIGHT AT BLOOD BARR.



ABOVE, RODNEY KEEPS WATCH FOR THE PERSON WHO COMES TO COLLECT THE BODIES...



TOO BAD YOU'RE NOT GONNA
GET TO SWAMP THAT FIVE
GRAND, FOP.

I DON'T THINK
WE SHOULD ASSE HIM,
ROONEY.

YOU'RE RIGHT.
I THINK I SHOULD
KILL BOP OF
YOU.

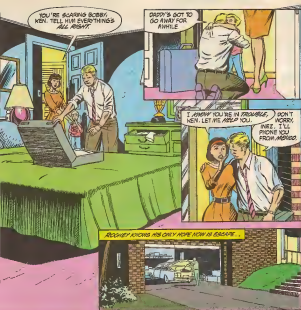
BLAM

BLAM

BOO DAMN SCHWABTSHIN!
OLD MAN! WAIT TILL NEXT TIME!

WHILE HIS PLAN HAD BEEN TO KID HIMSELF OF
BOTH A WEAK PARTNER AND A BLACKMAILER,
ROONEY WAS TO SETTLE FOR HALF A LEAD...

SEND...



*I, officer Kenneth
Rooney, freely
admit that I
killed Jimmy
Ramos and
my partner, Wayne
Stallings.*



DON'T SIGN ANYTHING,
KEN. AND YOU, MISTER,
YOU GET OUT OF THE
CAR HERE NOW.



TAKE OFF
KEN, NOW!



AIRPORT
EXITS 14A-14

I SHOULD
THOUGHT I'VE
BETTER... STAYED
AWAY FROM ALL
THEY JUNKIES...





I'VE GOT TO WAIT IN LINE WHILE TWO BRASH GUYS AND SOME DOP WHO LOOKS LIKE A GARBAGEY GET WAITED ON FIRST. THIS COUNTRY IS SEAMIN' TO SUCK.







John Butcher clung to the side of a cliff six hundred feet above the rocky scree on the eastern side of Buffalo Butte, twenty-two miles east of Mecklenburg, South Dakota. The sun was setting. Butcher was in shadow and already could feel a chill emanating from the rock. He had a set of thermal underwear in his pack, but he was in no position to change his clothes. He'd sunk a piton into the sandstone beneath a bulbous protrusion so that he was invisible to anyone standing above or directly below. Even a person scanning the cliff face knowing he was there would have had difficulty picking him out, so carefully had he insinuated himself into the weave of the stone.

"Become the stone, John, and not even the eagle can see you," his grandfather had told him. His grandfather had also told him the legend of Wovoka, the Piute medicine man, who had taught the People to dance the Ghost Dance, so that the white man would disappear from the land and the buffalo would return. The Ghost Dance had been a pacifist ceremony, but because of it, the Army massacred dozens of men, women, and children at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1890, the final crunching decimation of the Lakota Nation.

Now a Lakota medicine man named

Rupert Rains, who had taken the name Crippled Elk, was attempting to revive the ghost dance as a means to power. The problem with the old ghost dance, said Crippled Elk, was too much emphasis on faith and not enough on action. Dancing and singing won't do the job. You've got to grab a gun, put it to the white man's head and pull the trigger. And that's how you brought the buffalo back to the prairie.

Crippled Elk's interpretation held much appeal for bitter, disenfranchised Lakota who found themselves unwanted tenants in their own land. Crippled Elk had become the Abu Nidal of the

Black Hills, setting off a series of explosions from the Wild Bill Hickok Saloon in Deadwood to the Federal Court Building in Rapid City. He had surrounded himself with a cadre of desperate, dangerous men who believed his every word and were willing to die for the cause. Great, Butcher admired conviction. But so far, the New Ghost Dance Movement had killed four innocent bystanders and injured sixteen, including a Lakota mother and her two children who happened to be making a deposit in one of the banks Crippled Elk had targeted.

Such activities turned off the majority of Lakota, but had attracted others who were sick of a hundred years of empty promises.



G H O S T

MIKE BARON • WRITER

Crippled Elk was a special effects genius who used his skills to convince his followers of his mystical abilities. On one occasion, Crippled Elk had learned of an FBI agent who had infiltrated one of his cells and had slipped the man a slow-acting poison. During the cell meeting, Crippled Elk had pretended to divine the agent's presence, then put a complicated curse on him in the Lakota language. His timing had been exquisite. As Crippled Elk's finger had come to rest pointing at the agent, the man had suddenly lurched to his feet, turned the color of an eggplant, and died. Butcher had seen it happen. He had stood at the back of the hall wearing a disguise, fingering the nine millimeter Glock at his belt, aching to act, but helpless. To reveal himself would have been instant death.

An autopsy had revealed the presence of basidiomycetes, which came from the peyote cactus of the Southwest, and probably had been supplied by a fraternal Native American terrorist organization.

Thereafter, Butcher had become cautious and did not attempt to re-infiltrate the cell. He did not want Crippled Elk to recognize him.

Nor did Butcher feel comfortable turning over what he had learned to the FBI. He didn't trust the FBI. The agency still clung to J. Edgar Hoover's attitudes toward minorities: screw 'em. The FBI regarded any mode of behavior outside a Fred MacMurray movie to be highly



MIKE BOLD
EDITOR

DEAN MOTTER
DESIGN

DANCE

SHEA ANTON PENZA • ILLUSTRATOR



questionable. Now that the communist bloc had crumbled like stale angel-food, the FBI held aloft the scary totem of terrorist organizations. And of all the weirdos operating in the United States, Native Americans were potentially the scariest because they most resembled such models as the IRA and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, paradigms of their type.

They had nothing to lose. They believed it was noble to die in battle for their cause, and that they would be rewarded in the afterlife. They were scattered throughout the country and had insinuated themselves into numerous walks of life.

Butcher knew that most Native Americans were peaceful, gentle people who had no interest in going on the warpath. But the examples of others, and their own bleak history had created a significant cadre of desperate men who believed the only way they could redress centuries of injustice was through terrorist activity.

Butcher had learned of the Buffalo Butte Meet almost by accident. He'd been riding his new Harley Fat Boy from the dealership in Rapid City to a friend's house on the Belle Fourche Reservation, and had stopped at a roadside tavern in the hills for a soft drink. As he'd entered the cool, dusty log cabin, he saw three Indians sitting at a table. They nodded to

him, he nodded back. He sat at the bar and an old guy with a scraggly grey beard hiding no chin and an Adam's apple the size of a regulation baseball brought him an orange soda. The jukebox was pumping out Bob Seger.

As Butcher sipped his soda, he watched the men in the mirror behind the bar. He could make out the words "Crippled Elk" and "Buffalo Butte" before one of the men loudly slushed the others. Butcher paid more attention. He thought he might have seen two of the men at the cell meeting he'd infiltrated.

The three Indians at the table, having freaked themselves by blurring out secrets, now lapsed into friendly banter. One of them had gone outside to look at Butcher's bike, came back in and approached him at the bar. Butcher prayed that the man would not recognize him. The man was about six feet tall and narrow as a beam. He wore blue coveralls over a blue workshirt, and red-and-white Puma shoes. His glossy black hair was cut to the scalp on the sides, but sprang up like a hedge on top.





"Nice Fat Boy," the man said. "Just pick her up?"

Butcher nodded. "John Butcher," he said, holding out his hand. The man shook it.

"Wesley Wilson. I used to have a Low Rider, but some crackers in a pickup truck tried to run me off the road one night and that was that. Didn't even have no insurance. Now I'm saving up my pennies — I aim to get me another one as soon as I get it together. How you like it?"

"She's a fine ride, if you're not in a hurry." Butcher had wanted to hang around, learn more. But he did not want to make himself memorable. He finished his soda and sauntered out of the air-conditioned bar into the baking sun of late afternoon. A small pool of moisture had gathered on the concrete beneath the Fat Boy.

"Damn," Butcher muttered, getting down to examine the problem. The fools had

put too much oil in the crankcase and it had popped a seal in the head. It didn't look too serious — Butcher was sure he would be able to make the reservation without repairs. While he hunkered on the concrete examining his bike, the door opened and one of the men stood there in the entrance, turning back, talking to the others.

"See you on the butte, one week from tonight." He held his fist in a power salute, turned toward the parking lot and saw Butcher working on his bike. Butcher studiously ignored him, hoping the man would not recognize him, or think that he'd been paying attention.

The man came over. "Nice bike," he said. He looked at Butcher. Butcher looked back and smiled.

"Thanks." The man hadn't recognized him. Butcher had worn a wig to the cell meeting, and contact lenses that turned his brown eyes hazel. He had earned

himself differently and spoken differently, and it had been dark at the meeting. The man hung around, a little nervous.

"Where you from, brother?"

"West of here. Little place in Wyoming called Lance Creek."

"Sure, I know Lance Creek. You know a man there named Art Jourd? Runs the Ace Hardware?"

"No, can't say as I do."

The man slapped himself in the forehead.

"Whoops! Art's over in Fish Creek, Nebraska. I

always get those places mixed up. See you around, bro." The man got into his pickup and left. Butcher got on his hog and rode.

In the following days, he'd leaned on his sources hard to discover the nature of the meeting that would take place on Buffalo Butte. Talk of the Ghost Dance had been around for six months, since Crippled Elk had adopted the term for his organization. Members of the cell spoke of "doing the Ghost Dance," when they planned to detonate a bomb, or rob a bank, their second most popular activity.

When he finally put the pieces together, it was hard to believe. Crippled Elk was planning to stage a Ghost Dance ceremony atop Buffalo Butte and produce the long-dead Shatter Eye, a bloodthirsty shaman who'd sought to match the white man atrocity for atrocity. In 1892, American troops on horseback, motorcycle,

and car had chased the last remnants of Shatter Eye's band into a Manitoba Blizzard. He was never seen again, and was presumed to have died.

Shatter Eye had since become a symbol of Native American resistance — the type of resistance that would, in Butcher's mind, provoke a white backlash which would set back Indian rights a decade. The last thing Native Americans needed was to be identified with violent fanatics.

But Crippled Elk's plan was more elaborate than that. For one thing, it might involve some sort of sacrifice.

Although Butcher had never heard of Lakota or any of the other plains tribes performing sacrifice, other groups had not been so reluctant. What form this sacrifice would take, Butcher wasn't sure. He hoped that if it were true, it would involve an animal. And that was just the warm-up.

Somewhere on the Butte, considered sacred by all Indians, Crippled Elk had hidden a large cache of weapons and explosives. Using unspecified special effects, he planned to present himself as Shatter Eye reincarnate, to arm his men on the spot and present them with a series of plans — from five to eight, accounts varied — to blow up municipal buildings, rob banks, and kidnap important whites. The new Shatter Eye would stage an event to convince his followers that he possessed magical powers, and





send them out on the spot to instantly and simultaneously execute his multifarious plans. During the Boxer Rebellion, some kung fu masters had tricked their followers into believing they were invulnerable to bullets by standing up to blanks. Wovoka himself had produced ghost shirts which he claimed would render the wearer invulnerable.

Butcher was convinced that if Crippled Elk carried out his insane plan, many of his young followers would die — as well as innocent civilians. So Butcher had concocted a bold scheme: he would wait until Crippled Elk had “transformed” himself into Shatter Eye. Then Butcher would enter the circle of fire, claiming that he was the true Shatter Eye and Crippled Elk was an impostor. After that, he’d play it by ear. It wasn’t a bad plan, but it had inherent flaws. Crippled Elk, who stood five feet five inches tall, weighed 245 lbs., none of it fat, like a hyper-thyroid Indian Dwight Muhammad Qawi. Butcher weighed 165 and didn’t know if he could take him.

Butcher had a black belt in shorin-ryu, and had beaten many larger men. But he was realistic. Crippled Elk was a graduate of the Che Guevara School for Infiltration and Sabotage on Cuba. They had some of the best martial arts instructors in the world. Crippled Elk had messed up all sorts of people, including numerous law enforcement officers.

Butcher parked his bike at Perry Thigpen’s house, a pre-fab three-room shack at the edge of a desolate field. The hard dirt yard was filled with abandoned tires and engine blocks, but Perry was nowhere to be found. Perry had been working at an auto supply store in Dead-

wood, but had recently lost his job and was at loose ends. John had hoped to talk with his friend and see if there was anything he could do to help, but it would have to wait.

Butcher prepared his gear and went into the scrub hills to the north to purify himself for the coming battle. It had been a long time since he’d practiced the ceremony, but the knowledge never left him. In ancient times, he would have fasted to induce a vision. But Butcher had learned too much — he would need his strength. He was certain that Wankan Tanka understood the demands of a new age and forgave him for the alterations he had made. So Butcher walked into the scrub prairie with a sixty-pound pack containing dehydrated beef stroganoff and chocolate as well as the red pipestone and he would offer to the four corners of the earth.

He stayed in the tent for two nights while he worked on the old sweat lodge. The poles and skins had been torn down a hundred times, but the circular depression with the fireplace remained, pristine and ready as it had stood for a hundred years. After Butcher had rigged the frame from local saplings and pieces of canvas, he set up the specially-prepared liquid propane stove, modified to hold a brazier filled with stones. No way, in that picked-over place, would he have been able to gather sufficient firewood to build a decent fire. The lodge’s entrance faced east. Butcher stripped himself and entered, carrying only a spray of sage.

Normally, a helper would have assisted him with the stones, but he had already placed these in the stove. He had also brought water from a nearby creek and

used it to fill a large corrugated steel wash basin.

For three days, Butcher prayed, ate sparingly, and carefully reviewed his life in preparation for the coup. He rose at dawn and bowed naked before the sun. He returned to the lodge and smoked the pipe four times, turning to point the stem to the four corners of the earth. He flicked water on the stones and when the heat became unbearable, chewed sage and spat it on the stones. Everything was done in sets of four. From time to time he would peer out the entrance at the small vision hill, or hambelachiya he had built three feet from the entrance. On the third day, he thought he saw the miniature outline of a woman's moccasin, a good omen.



Later, he threw himself into the stream. On the third night, he dreamed of crows picking through battlefield remains, tearing gobbets of flesh from the ribs of a black horse. A bad omen. Just before dawn, he dreamed he was grappling with the Trickster, who had the face of Randall Corvus, the man who had murdered his parents. He woke abruptly, in a sweat, to the rumble of an early morning thunderstorm. He realized that his vision quest was over.

He took two days to recover from the sweat lodge, drinking Gatorade and working out in his friend's backyard, running and hitting a heavy bag hung

from a tree.

Buffalo Butte was located in the Belle Fourche National Grasslands. Its remote location made it unpopular with tourists, but to the Lakota and a few other tribes, it was the most sacred place on Earth — more sacred, even, than the Black Hills.

Butcher knew that Crippled Elk would have his followers on the Butte masquerading as peaceful, devout worshippers days in advance. It was probable that members of the Ghost Dance Cell were on the Butte at all times, working in shifts, to safeguard their cache and recruit new members.

Butcher had made his approach at night, running eight miles over the rolling prairie, fording streams and threading barbed wire to reach the eastern slope, and began his ascent by moon-

light. He'd slept on a rocky ledge two hundred feet up, rose at the light of dawn, drunk a mixture of orange juice, raw egg, and yeast powder before resuming his ascent.

It had taken him four hours to reach the indentation where he had waited for dusk. It was time for the final ascent. Strapping the holstered Colt .45 behind his left hip, Butcher adjusted his crampons, ammunition, and water and prepared to swing out on the nylon line he'd affixed to a rock protrusion ten feet overhead. From where he crouched clinging to the piton, he could not see straight down to the ground, six hundred feet below. But when he swung out on the line, he would be hanging directly above



the rocks. He had only himself to rely on — if anything happened to that line he'd be buzzard food.

Butcher practiced his *taijin* breathing as Tsunami had taught him years ago on Okinawa. When he felt calm but slightly exhilarated, he squeezed his grip around the line and gently let go of the piton. The breeze chilled the sweat on his face and torso as he swung toward the eastern horizon and for an instant, as his swing carried him beyond the rocky protrusion that had concealed him from above, he could hear men conversing in excited snatches and the beat of drums. He looked up. He was too close to the side of the butte for him to see anyone on top, and they weren't looking down. His luck held.

Butcher worked his way up over the pro-

trusion and paused on a six-inch shelf. He was now ten feet beneath the top of the butte and he could hear the men more clearly, but the words were indistinct, stifled by angle and distance. He looked back toward the east, which was now cloaked in darkness. Around the edges of the butte, to the north and south, he could see fading light the color of burnt macaroni as the sun set. It was decidedly chilly on the rock, despite the thermals rising from the prairie below. A curious owl glided soundlessly by, carrying a mouse in its beak.

Butcher nodded to the owl. "Here's to you, little brother," he whispered into the wind. At least it hadn't been a crow. If it had, Butcher would have considered abandoning the mission, because that would have been a very bad sign.

inch by inch, Butcher hauled himself up the cliff face until his gloved hands gripped a sharp protrusion from which he could boost himself onto a ledge four feet below the table that was the top of Buffalo Butte. The butte top was not completely flat — it rolled and rippled like an old pool table left out for a winter, and was covered with configurations of massive boulders, the pool balls of some giant. The butte was roughly a quarter mile in diameter at the top. Cautiously, Butcher slithered over the edge of the rim and crawled into the midst of a jumble of boulders. Feeling his way with his gloved hand, he made enough noise to discourage any reptiles that might have crawled into the rocks to sleep. Crouching, he was able to peer through a triangle-shaped partition straight to the center of the butte, where Crippled Elk's men had constructed a large bonfire in the traditional place, a ten-foot fire hold rimmed by large boulders. Carefully, Butcher counted as many as he could see. He counted twenty-four, but figured on at least a dozen more who would be stationed around the rim and on the lower depths as lookouts.

Six men sat cross-legged in a bunch beating on drums, bongos, a tambourine, and fakes of nonexistent ceremonial drums purchased at souvenir stands throughout the west. A boom box puffed out "Fight the Power," but was overwhelmed by the drums and the breeze.

Men were laughing and talking among

themselves, and from the wild gyrations of some of the dancers, they were drinking. Butcher searched the crowd man by man for Crippled Elk but the Lakota medicine man was nowhere to be found. Butcher settled himself for another wait. By the rising moon it was not yet nine o'clock and the last orange brown residue of the day was slipping between the peaks of the hills to the west.

Wesley Wilson stepped out of the shadows into the circle of light holding an assault rifle. Aiming at the stars, he fired a full clip. The staccato ripping sound seemed to go on forever as brass shells glided in the firelight before falling to the ground. When at last the gun fell silent, the drumming stopped and all eyes were on Wilson.

"Okay!" he shouted. "We're all here. The Great Spirit's lookin' down and smiling and sayin' get to it! We got one to lead us now, and one to lead us later. Who's gonna lead us?"

"Crippled Elk!" the assembly shouted.

"What?" Wilson demanded.

"Crippled Elk! Crippled Elk! Crippled Elk!" The chant built in intensity until it took on a life of its own, defying the vastness of the night sky and the efforts of the wind to flick it away. Concealed in boulders two hundred feet from the action, Butcher felt their atavistic power and could not prevent himself from reacting.

CONTINUED IN
NEXT ISSUE



MS. TREE

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Remember last issue, when I said that henceforth *SWAN* would be written by the erstwhile Mr. Collins—true to established Mr. Tree tradition? If so, you will might ask: what the heck I'm doing here.

Outside of my blurring another typical yet clumsy attempt to assert my ego, the reason I'm the writer of this issue's *SWAN* is quite simple: Dick Tracy. You might have heard about it. You might have read the newspaper stop-justification of erstwhile himself. You might have read the paperback novelization of the movie (and/or the writing of it, erstwhile himself). You might even have seen the movie—only about a million people are expected to have done so.

The problem is, in this, the two-week period prior to the movie's opening, Mr. Collins has been besieged by trillions of newspaper reporters and television interviewers and, the sum total of Mr.'s Dick Tracy airtime actually is longer than the run of any post-M*A*S*H McLean Stevenson television show (a little known fact). It's been all Max could do to do all these interviews and stay relatively current on his *MS. TREE* and Dick Tracy deadlines—let alone the deadlines for his newest novel.

So, since the amount of time between the release of *MS. TREE QUARTERLY* #1 and the later column deadline was a mere two weeks, we opted to keep Max at the word processor writing the script for our next issue . . . and I stepped in to lend a hand.

Max will be in this space next issue, if the creek don't rise.

Ms. Tree and Co.

I would like to congratulate you on *MS. TREE Quarterly* #1. I have to admit this isn't the kind of book I would normally get into; I'm mostly into the "super hero" books (in that, the main reason I bought this book was for the Batman story). I am happy to say, however, that I'll definitely keep on buying this book.

The *MS. TREE* Storm was really great. She has a lot of guts and the brains to go with it. I'll look forward to the next complete story.

The Midnight story was very good as well. I've never read *The Spirit*, whom Midnight is supposed to look like, but I'm sure they are not carbon copies of each other. It will be interesting to see in what direction this series goes.

As for the illustrated story, well, I have already confessed that I mean was the main reason I bought this book; however, I didn't know what to expect. I was very pleasantly surprised.

The Storm was great and the art was brilliant. Mike Gail already had my respect for his great writing and occasional art on *GREEN ARROW*. In this story, he kept the art rather simple, but each illustration told a story. FASCINATING! This illustrated story is a great idea, I can't wait to read more.

I would love to see Green Arrow in these pages, but something tells me he'll be showing up in *QUESTION QUARTERLY*. The Huntress, Batgirl, and Hellblazer would be great, too. Also, Mike Gail was a great start, so how about Frank Miller, John Byrne, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Brian Bolland.

I hope *MS. TREE Quarterly* becomes one of your best sellers.

Arnold Jordan
1288 S.W. 8th Street
Miami, FL 33135

Green Arrow's a possibility. Batman's too right now. And *Red Rover's* a great idea, let's see what we can do.

Dear Max and Terry,

I must admit I'm more than a little surprised to find myself writing to "SWAN" over three years after I purchased what I thought would be my last issue of *MS. TREE*. A good surprise, though, as *MS. TREE* was one of my favorite comics of the mid-eighties.

Maybe I should've expected it, actually, after all, Ms. Tree has shown up in books published by more publishers than any other character. I know of. And, thanks to Max and Terry, she has always managed to remain true to form.

That having been said, though, I must admit I was a little disappointed with the story in *MS. TREE Quarterly* #1. Maybe I just had expectations that were too high, but the story seemed . . . routine. There was a number of good points: Michael punching Dominique and later Donna; Mike's act actually spring in real time; and Dominique (surprisingly) being put out of the picture. But there were also a number of bad

points: hot cold blooded murders on pages 3 and 45 seemed too cold, even for Ms. Tree, and solving another Martin murder just seemed redundant.

I didn't care much for the Midnight story, either. (If I weren't getting around to reading the Batman one yet), and it would have been nice if Ms. Tree were on the cover.

Still, I do intend to stick around (despite the pretty cover price—I can afford it, but that's not the point) as I have a lot of faith in Max.

One last thing with the success of *Batman* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and the probable success of *Dick Tracy*, and *Warner Communications* now publishing this book, a *Ms. Tree* movie doesn't seem far-fetched at all.

Paul Averack
2811 74th Street
Jackson Heights, NY 11370

How true that . . . who was it on the cover of your first issue, if not Ms. Tree?

Dear Mike, Max, and Terry,

The long-awaited return of Ms. Tree was a pleasure. For starters, seeing the strip in color again was wonderful. Beyond that, Terry's art has never looked better; the differences his own adding makes is phenomenal.

Then there are Max's storytelling skills, allowed here to stretch and relax a bit in 48 pages, so new readers can be easily introduced to the characters while old faithfuls are rewarded by some nice characterizing scenes. And, of course, a suitably violent and mesmerizing story. It's nice to see that Tree still has her personality quirks intact.

I was struck, reading this book, what a fine cast of characters Max has created over the years—certainly enough to guarantee a lot of new stories with single issues for character development and plot twists a plenty.

I'd be doing for the rule without the second half of the book, hell, 48 pages of Ms. Tree alone is a dream come true. The addition of Midnight and revolving just pages is atop on the cake. I'm not certain yet whether the wait is as good as the cake, but I'm not remote to trying some more before I make my own cake.

Though I am a fan of both Ed Gorman's own writing and his wonderful *Mystery Score*, I was underwhelmed by the actual material.

ment of Midnight. The gambit that he doesn't speak when he identifies himself seems meaningless to me. The story was also one-dimensional—no real mystery involved, and very much the Penderest sort of page, pay, and satisfaction thing.

In truth, I expected more from Ed. Perhaps it's too soon to judge, but I'd certainly like to see a more rounded personality emerge in future installments. The art, on the other hand, was more than amply adequate for the story.

As for the last piece, I'm uncomfortable with it. I have a hard time with test pieces in general—the two areas like oil and water to me. It's simply not what I buy comics for. And while I had no trouble reading Denny's Batman story, I'd also say I would rather have seen a comic story in the place. I appreciate the experiment here and the reasoning behind it, but again, when I buy comics, comics are what I want. I'll reserve judgment till after reading the upcoming collection of test pieces, many of which sound intriguing. So far, the rest isn't important.

Overall, however, this is a stunning package and well worth the huge change. It's amazing MS:THREE has already lived through fifty issues—let's hope her life at DC is at least as long.

Jeff Gels
c/o Radio and Records
1028 Century Park West
Los Angeles, CA 90067

The test stories are indeed an experiment. Jeff, if our readers tell us they'd prefer another comic story, or perhaps a 34-page comic instead of the current 30-page, *how* are *we* hard feelings. As far as, these types of experiments are concerned.

Dear Mike:

OUTSTANDING! Boy, was I ever impressed with the first issue of MS:THREE QUANTITELY.

I had heard of the MS:THREE comics but so much of my entertainment budget went toward DC titles that I rarely had any left over for independent purchases. I just may have to start going through the back issues like at the local comic store and find some.

I have rarely been this impressed after only one issue of any comic. You very definitely have a winner here. How about my only test—about this quarterly thing...

You have an outstanding title here and I would gladly add it to my regular "must purchase" list if you could make it a monthly. ? Pretty please.

It just crossed my mind that MS:THREE would make an excellent crossover miniseries with some other than DC's own El Diablo? Wouldn't that be grand? Boy, could they ever both head over the best way to handle a case. But, think about it—they are both set in the "real world" and both have such characteristically opposed philos-

ophies and approaches to essentially the same job. Oh, I know this rule about featured characters NEVER doing crossovers with DC characters, but it would make an interesting mental image.

Do keep up the great work—you've really got it started for you and the rest of the crew to top the first issue!

Jon S. Affton
1043 Rosedale Avenue SE
Atlanta, GA 30302

Look, Jon, call me a wimp if you want, but I don't want to be the one to tell Mike w/ Terry they've got to produce 48 pages of MS:THREE each and every month. Or even 34 pages each and every month. They simply don't have that much time on their schedules.

Dear Sam,

After rereading about the return of Ms. Tree I wanted to write to tell you I am excited about the soon-to-come MS:THREE QUANTITELY! I've been fan of the hard-edged detective since the 21st issue of her first series (I bought all the back issues after that as well as the three "Pins of" books). To have Ms. Tree in a book on a regular basis in the best news I could get.

The format sounds like the best one yet and with some test issues will be solid package. Even if you are doing the mentioned Batman story, it will be fantastic.

I am worried about a few things, though. Is the comic going to be re-titled to the Comics Code? When you say "independent," will that mean you could finally get away with murder (I will think that's what Ms. Tree did to the child molester who kidnapped her son in the second "Rainbow" story)? I know the Code would never allow it.

What kind of constraints will DC have over the book? Same as the best stuff I know that was done in the last comic would never pass in a lot of DC regular series. The story with King Lear and the abortion stories were all out as the "bigger" ones.

The WILD DOG special was great. I loved it when the mobster tells Wild Dog not to shoot him and he replies with a simple "Are you kidding?" I like the idea of a Ms. Tree and Wild Dog team up. She would be annoyed by his vigilante ways and I think it would make her reflect on her own way of handling situations.

I've already said my comic shop owner to hold a copy of MS:THREE QUANTITELY for me and am hoping to see a shipping date soon.

Richard M. Moland
5240 Hallman Lane
Bowie, VA 22015

As you can see, Richard, we are indeed Catholics, although I think it would be rather fun to see the Code crossed up through an issue...grapeing their little hearts...grapeing for us...
—Murray Blue

Dear Mike,

On behalf of all DC fans, I welcome you and Ms. Tree to our world. I've read about Mike and her hard-bitten adventures for these years. I followed other creations you brought us, especially Wild Dog. I even read your book about TV detectives.

The return of MS:THREE marked as one of the high points on the DC schedule, and in a quarterly with limited ads, color, and 48 uninterrupted pages of action just. But was it worth the wait, or the hype, or the price?

THREE Granted, the story had too many flashbacks to acquaint me and other new readers with the character, but they can't be avoided. Every thing else was perfect, a blend of the action. I love in Dashiell Hammett's works and a modern, mature sensibility about the character.

What's below that's private investigation could be a loving mother and a police killer? But it works. You've created a set of characters who don't fit into simple holes in a world where all the human elements collide in a maelstrom of violence. Bravo.

I wish there was a shorter monthly. I mean, having to wait three months to meet up with Mike again, just when I've met her? Or her crimes?

I particularly like (as a character, not a person) Don Dondra. Too often the Mob is portrayed as a bunch of thugs. Unfortunately, they're *smoos* born that simple, and today's breed makes Capone look absolutely primitive. Don Dondra represents a step forward from the old Mob to the modern sleazebag running legit businesses illegitimately. Let's hope that Mike finds a few intriguing new ways to bring the sun down to the father's current level.

Too often, female writers complain that men cannot write women. While that might be true of others, you show no signs of being incapable of anything. She feels as real and as believable as any woman, even within her crimes. She reads with such conviction as Chris Chappay or Nora Charles in the world of crime and women. If only Jessica Fletcher would just be tougher.

All in all, a great first issue. But I'm expecting more. After all, that's the only quarterly aimed at an adult audience. I bought this as a change after THE QUESTION, and while I'm giving you a chance, am wrong more over our limited budgets changes to include Denny's fantastic crime-fighter. But then, I know you won't let me down. Dashiell, Wild Dog is coming in a year or so. See you in three.

Simon DeMonte
Queens, New York

NEXT ISSUE, Ms. Tree and young Mike face some serious personal problems, as our hero and her stepson must confront the issue of gay homosexuality in our society. Plus, Midnight and another illustrated prize feature—and a fantastic painted cover from Scott Hampton!

—Mike Gold